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*Captain J. A. Brooks, Texas Ranger* (review)

Jody Edward Ginn

Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 111, Number 4, April 2008, pp. 451-453 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2008.0096>



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was likely a descendant of an eleventh-century armor bearer to a Scottish king. That ancestor's bravery and quick thinking on the battlefield garnered him the nickname of "Strong Arm" or "Armstrong," a family trait not lost on John B. Armstrong. As Siward the Armstrong, who rescued his temporarily felled king in Scotland in those ancient times, rose in prominence to become Earl of Northumberland, so too John B. Armstrong rose among the highest echelon of Texas society. He did so with humility that is rarely characteristic of such men.

Parsons's study of Armstrong's relatively short career as a Texas Ranger, 1875–1878, is filled with exploits of hair-raising adventure, each one centered on his impending demise at the hands of scheming cattle rustlers, vengeful Indians, and other violent characters. One occasion for which Armstrong is most remembered is his capture of one of Texas's leading men outlaws, John Wesley Hardin, in 1877.

For fans of tales of cowboys, Indians, outlaws, and lawmen of the Old West, *John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman* does not disappoint. Chapters with titles such as "Genesis of a Fighting Man," "Blood on the Palo Alto Prairie," and "Facing the Man Killer," promise and deliver action, trickery, and hot lead with the turn of each page. Where the book goes beyond expectations, in this reviewer's opinion, is its treatment of Armstrong the former Ranger as he transitions to become a successful family man, rancher, businessman, and civic leader. In later chapters of *John B. Armstrong* Parsons dutifully, yet with a sense of the familial, shows the Texas scion to be a man not satisfied with having his career in law enforcement as his only legacy, impressive as it was. Parsons writes that Armstrong was entrenched in the fabric that was the new Texas. He realized its potential as his own. This is where Parsons has gone beyond the biographical norm. All too many accounts of historical figures whose reputations rest on their services as lawmen, honorable as those were, provide the reader character analyses that leave the subject handcuffed to a rather one-dimensional representation. Parsons gives the reader John B. Armstrong, the Texas Ranger. But it is in the remaining chapters that the reader is introduced to the multi-faceted man many of his descendants undoubtedly knew. In the chapters "Pioneer Ranchman," and "Rancher Among the Rails," is found the John B. Armstrong that Parsons wishes the reader to know and understand.

For fans of the traditional Old West shoot-'em-up, and those interested in knowing what became of the men who outlived their violent pasts, Parsons brings the two together with this book. *John B. Armstrong: Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman* belongs not only in the Texas history section of libraries, but it probably could hold its place in the Humanities section as well.

*Katy, Texas*

DAN ANDERSON

*Captain J. A. Brooks, Texas Ranger.* By Paul N. Spellman. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2007. Pp. 288. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-57441-227-2. \$24.95, cloth.)

In the first book-length treatment of this notable figure in Ranger history, Paul Spellman (professor of Texas and American History at Wharton Junior College, Old Three Hundred descendant, and biographer of Capt. John H. Rogers) produces a

well-rounded survey of the life and times of James Abijah Brooks, one of the "Four Great Captains." In examining Brooks's meteoric rise to Texas Ranger captain and his feats—both lauded and controversial—along the way, the author provides an in-depth view of his professional triumphs and personal foibles.

Born into affluence on November 20, 1855, in Bourbon County, Kentucky, Captain Brooks's idyllic childhood was shattered when the Civil War arrived on his doorstep and took his father's life. The Brooks family was cast into poverty with the loss of its patriarch at a time in American history when daily life was harsh and unforgiving for even the wealthy. Despite coming of age in the hardship and repression of Reconstruction, Brooks received a reasonable amount of classroom education in his youth. He spent even more time honing his skills as an outdoorsman in the mountains of Kentucky. It should come as no surprise that a southern teenager growing up in this tumultuous environment would desire a change of scenery and be easily drawn in by tales of wide open Texas spaces, cattle drives, and Indian wars. But while Brooks was able to escape his childhood misery geographically, his lifelong battle with alcoholism (Kentucky bourbon, to be exact) would forever link him to a tragic past.

Spellman capably describes the complex era in which Captain Brooks served. It was a time of ground-breaking transition for the Rangers: as Native American conflicts waned, the role of the Rangers changed from that of a post-Reconstruction era "Frontier Battalion" (a paramilitary unit) to its twentieth-century reincarnation as the "Ranger Force" (a statewide peace-keeping organization). The Rangers were tasked with a variety of responsibilities, including investigating and pursuing free-range advocates during the "Fence Cutter Wars," maintaining order in Batson Prairie and Moonshine Hill (some of the earliest oil boom towns), and restoring the peace during labor disputes in the Rio Grande Valley. Throughout this progression, the Rangers relied on Captain Brooks's leadership. In discussing the trajectory of Captain Brooks's career, the author addresses the controversial events (often stemming from ethnic conflicts) and, in most cases, does so with appropriate detail and critical discernment. Such events include the Garza War in South Texas, which involved suppression of revolutionary activities in Texas aimed at deposing the Porfirio Díaz regime in Mexico, and the Baker/de la Cerda incident in the Rio Grande Valley, in which Ranger A. Y. Baker shot and killed two Tejano ranchers who were brothers. In contrast, the author's summary treatment of Brooks's activities during the labor disputes in Minera lacks the same diligence displayed in his coverage of the aforementioned events.

Captain Brooks's public triumphs belied his private faults: as succinctly stated by the author, "His family hardly knew him, and what they knew of him personally they did not much care for; his descendants acknowledge his public fame but admit 'no one really liked him'" (pp. 208–209). The author also delves into Captain Brooks's post-Ranger career, including his brief stint as a state representative (where his primary focus was securing the creation of a namesake county) and his 28 years as a county judge.

Notwithstanding Spellman's acknowledgement of the diversity of views on certain events in Captain Brooks's career, the reader comes away with the impression that the author's sympathies are with the Rangers generally and with Brooks

in particular. Lastly, the coverage of particular topics does not necessarily comport with chapter titles, which makes the book somewhat difficult to navigate. On the whole, however, it is an informative work on an intriguing figure in Texas history.

*Texas State University—San Marcos*

JODY EDWARD GINN

*Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas.* Edited by Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Pp. 312. Illustrations, color plates, notes, index. ISBN 978-1-58544-563-9. \$19.95, cloth.)

Texans are a people with a strong sense of identity. *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas* takes a look at the ways in which Texans' collective memories of past events have helped shape that identity. This edited collection by Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner contributes to a growing body of historical scholarship that deals with the concept of collective memory and the way groups use the past in order to assert their identity, justify or attack power relationships in society, and promote contemporary social and political agendas.

As with any edited collection, the chapters of the book represent a variety of perspectives and concerns. Among the most interesting of the essays are those that look at the way past generations have used memory to promote their own agendas and, conversely, the ways in which those agendas shaped their own views of Texas history. Gregg Cantrell's contribution illuminates the way in which Progressive Era Texans took a renewed interest in Texas Revolutionary-era leaders, propping them up as entrepreneurial, risk-taking icons who represented Progressive values. Similarly, Walter Buenger examines the way that both the Texas Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the anti-Klan forces of the era used collective memory in order to further their own agendas.

Several contributions to the collection focus on group identity within Texas, demonstrating that there is no one unified Texan memory of past events. Selections on African American memories of Emancipation and of the Civil Rights Era, by Elizabeth Hayes Turner and Yvonne Davis Frear, respectively, show how Texan African Americans forged effective "counter-memories" (p. 167) to that of dominant white society but also have faced internal generational divisions in the way they remember historical events. Other groups have given attention as well. Andrés Tijerina writes on the need to give more attention to Tejano contributions to the Texas past, and Kelly McMichael discusses the efforts of white Texas women to shape societal values by erecting Confederate monuments throughout the state after the Civil War.

Lastly, a number of the chapters examine the way that professional historians and other custodians of the past succeed or fail in shaping collective memory. Laura Lyons McLemore's chapter on the impact of early historians on Texas memory finds that professional historians had very little influence on Texans' view of their own past. Ricky Floyd Dobbs notes a similar lack of influence in modern Texas as he laments the fading interest in Lyndon Baines Johnson, despite attempts to keep his memory alive. Several chapters evaluate some of the ways in which historians deal with the